

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 7028

By Powell

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Father Charles Frederick Strobel of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Father Charles Frederick Strobel; and

WHEREAS, Father Strobel was a beloved Catholic priest, humanitarian, and founding director of Room In The Inn, a street outreach organization he started in 1985; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong advocate for the poor and unhoused, Father Charles Strobel was born on March 12, 1943, and grew up in Nashville's Germantown neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Father Strobel felt called to the priesthood at a young age, and after graduating from Father Ryan High School in 1961, he attended seminary at St. Mary's College in Kentucky and studied theology at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., where he became immersed in the Civil Rights Movement and from which he received a master's degree in 1970; and

WHEREAS, he also received a master's degree in education from Xavier University and an honorary doctorate in divinity from MacMurray College; and

WHEREAS, after his ordination in 1970, Father Charles Strobel served for five years in Knoxville as the Associate Pastor of Immaculate Conception parish; he also taught at Knoxville Catholic High School and was an instructor in the University of Tennessee's Department of Human Services; and

WHEREAS, after returning home to Nashville in 1975, Father Strobel was named associate pastor of Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Donelson; in 1977, he was named pastor of Holy Name Catholic Church in Edgefield; and

WHEREAS, at Holy Name, people experiencing homelessness would frequently visit the parish, and Father Strobel and his staff would prepare them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches; this act of kindness soon led to the formation of the Loaves and Fishes Food Bank to provide meals to those in need; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, Father Charles Strobel began using some of Holy Name's unused space to provide overnight housing in the winter months for those experiencing homelessness, and by December 1986, he had launched Room In The Inn with four congregations; and

WHEREAS, two weeks after founding the organization, Father Strobel's mother, Mary Catherine Strobel, was murdered in a random act of violence; a lifelong and vocal opponent of the death penalty, he embraced kindness and forgiveness and did not support the death penalty for his mother's killer, despite enduring the pain and heartbreak of her death; and

WHEREAS, Father Strobel poured his energy into Room In The Inn in the ensuing weeks, and by the end of that winter, thirty-one churches, synagogues, and mosques had answered his call to welcome the unhoused under their roofs; and

WHEREAS, Father Charles Strobel left Holy Name in 1987 to devote himself full time to his role as director of Room In The Inn, a position he held until 2005, when he became more of a pastoral leader in the organization; and

WHEREAS, today, some 200 congregations representing different faith traditions partner with Room In The Inn to shelter nearly 1,500 people from November 1 to March 31 each year in Nashville, with more than thirty Room In The Inn programs operating across the country; and

WHEREAS, Nashville's Room In The Inn headquarters consists of a 64,000-square-foot downtown campus that also offers emergency services, transitional programs, and long-term solutions, including mental and physical healthcare services, education, employment support, and permanent housing, to help people rebuild their lives; and

WHEREAS, Father Strobel received many accolades throughout his life, including the Human Relations Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1989, the Catholic Charities Annual Service Award from the Diocese of Nashville in 2002, the 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Nashville Chapter of the ACLU, the Joe Kraft Humanitarian Award in 2018, the Operation Andrew Annual Joe & Honey Rodgers Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019, AgeWell Middle Tennessee's Sage Award in 2021, and the Father Ryan Legacy Award in 2021; in 2004, the *Nashville Scene* named him Nashvillian of the Year, and in 2005, he was one of ten people designated Tennessean of the Year by *The Tennessean*; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his parents, Martin and Mary Catherine Schweiss Strobel; his sister and brother-in-law, Veronica Strobel-Seigenthaler and Thomas Seigenthaler; his sister-in-law, Patricia Holzapfel Strobel; and his great-niece, Mary Catherine Strobel Hayes; and

WHEREAS, left to cherish his memory are his brother, Martin Jerome Strobel; his sister Alice Strobel Eadler; his brother-in-law, Robert Eadler; his nieces and nephews, Katie Seigenthaler, Beth Seigenthaler Courtney, Amy Seigenthaler Pierce, Amelia Strobel, Martin Strobel, Maria Seigenthaler, Merrill Strobel Bohren, Daniel Strobel, Margaret Strobel Pyburn, Morgan Strobel, Charlie Eadler, and Katie Eadler; many great-nieces and great-nephews; legions of friends; the staff of Room In The Inn; and everyone Room In The Inn serves; and

WHEREAS, Father Charles Strobel lived a life of radical service defined by his conviction that society's highest obligation is to care for its most marginalized members, from those on the street to those on death row; he delivered his call for peace and justice with gentle warmth and an easy smile, drawing to him people of every faith, creed, ethnicity, and perspective in common cause; and

WHEREAS, every time Father Strobel approached either a pulpit or a podium, he used the opportunity to ask those assembled to recognize their shared poverty and to lift up their fellow human beings too often denied a seat at the table. Upon receiving the Kraft Award in 2018, he again pleaded for a kinder world where the least of these are treated with the most respect; with tears in his eyes, he said, "They deserve to be here."; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional spiritual leader and devoted servant of God; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Father Charles Frederick Strobel, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Father Strobel.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.